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The University of Montana

NEWS RELEASE

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Missoula, MT 59812
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Oct. 6, 1993

UM POLL GAUGES MONTANANS' VIEWS ON HEALTH CARE

MISSOULA --

Most Montanans endorse the idea of universal health care coverage in the state and would rather sacrifice some of their health care benefits than pay higher taxes for such coverage, according to the latest Montana Poll conducted by The University of Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research.

Among the 424 adult Montanans interviewed, 85 percent agreed that all Montanans should be allowed to receive basic medical care regardless of their ability to pay, 11 percent disagreed and 4 percent were undecided. The Montana Poll was based on telephone interviews conducted Sept. 22-27 by the Bureau of Business and Economic Research.

While support for universal health care was expressed across the board, that support was most widespread among younger Montanans, who tend to have a lower incidence of health insurance coverage, and among college graduates, according to Montana Poll director Susan Selig Wallwork. Ninety-two percent of participants between the ages of 18 and 34 supported universal health care, as did 90 percent of the college graduates polled. Montanans at the high end of the income scale, with incomes over \$50,000, were slightly less likely (80 percent) to endorse such universal coverage, she said.

"Universal coverage at a reasonable cost has its own price tag, of course, and will call for compromises among the major players -- health care consumers, providers, and insurers," Wallwork said.

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According to the poll results, Montana public opinion would expect health care providers and health care insurers, along with consumers, to share in the necessary compromise. Seventy-three percent of Montanans agreed that health care providers and insurers must compromise their own benefits to guarantee such coverage, 16 percent disagreed and 11 percent were undecided. While this support was relatively comprehensive, Republicans and those with higher incomes were somewhat less likely to agree (64 percent in each case).

Sixty-six percent of respondents said they would be willing to sacrifice some of their own benefits to guarantee universal coverage in the state, and 23 percent disagreed. High-income Montanans expressed slightly less willingness to compromise (62 percent) than other groups, and Republicans were the least willing to compromise their own benefits (53 percent, with 34 percent opposed). Among Democrats, roughly eight in ten were willing to compromise.

There was less support for higher taxes to guarantee health insurance to every Montanan, Wallwork said. Public opinion was divided, she said, with 44 percent saying they were willing to pay higher taxes, 49 percent opposed and 7 percent undecided.

Sentiments did not vary noticeably with income, Wallwork said, but political affiliations brought significant differences. Almost six Democrats in ten (57 percent) said they were willing to pay higher taxes, while among Republicans a similar majority (58 percent) was opposed. The strongest opposition, 74 percent, though, was evidenced among the few respondents who said they are involved with United We Stand America, headed by Ross Perot.

In the tradeoff between the freedom to choose medical services and efforts to control health care costs, Montanans appear somewhat more likely to opt for choice, the poll found. Fifty percent of the respondents said that they put more importance on being able to choose their medical services, while 25 percent said cost containment was more important. Another 20 percent

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volunteered that both are equally important; about 5 percent were undecided. The preference for choice increased slightly with income and was highest among Montanans with household incomes over \$50,000 (58 percent) and among Republicans (63 percent).

Roughly eight Montanans in ten, 79 percent, said that regardless of how the system is working overall, they personally get the health care they need when they need it, Wallwork said, noting that trend conforms with the findings of various national polls. Only 18 percent disagreed, and 4 percent were undecided. While those sentiments were relatively comprehensive, larger households and those with children expressed slightly less agreement. Those who live alone and those with high incomes expressed the most agreement (85 percent and 91 percent, respectively). Agreement tended to decline as income declined, perhaps reflecting the impact of income on people's ability to avail themselves of health care, Wallwork said.

The Montana Poll uses a two-stage random sampling process to generate a representative cross-section of the state's adult population. The poll's overall error margin is 4.8 percent.

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SJ/kr

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MONTANA POLL

Bureau of Business and Economic Research, The University of Montana (Missoula, Montana 59812).

Sample: Adult residents of Montana (n=424)

Poll dates: September 22-27, 1993

	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Undecided</u>
Regardless of how the system is working overall, I personally get the health care I need when I need it.	79%	18%	4%
Every person in Montana should be allowed to receive basic medical care, regardless of their ability to pay.	85%	11%	4%
Health care providers and insurers must compromise their own benefits to guarantee health care coverage to all Montanans at a reasonable cost.	73%	16%	11%
Guaranteeing health care coverage to all Montanans at a reasonable cost will require compromises and sacrifices, and I am willing to make some sacrifices with my own benefits to guarantee that coverage.	66%	23%	10%
I am willing to pay higher taxes so that everyone in Montana can have health insurance.	44%	49%	7%
When it comes to you personally, which is more important -- controlling your health care costs, or being able to choose the medical services you want?			
Controlling costs		25%	
Being able to choose services		50%	
Both equally important (volunteered)		20%	
Can't say, undecided (volunteered)		5%	

NOTE: Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.

For further information, contact:

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